

PATENT COOPERATION TREATY



PCT

REC'D 27 OCT 1999

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INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION REPORT

(PCT Article 36 and Rule 70)

Applicant's or agent's file reference SZ9-97-009	FOR FURTHER ACTION See Notification of Transmittal of International Preliminary Examination Report (Form PCT/IPEA/416)	
International application No. PCT/IB97/00893	International filing date (day/month/year) 17/07/1997	Priority date (day/month/year) 17/07/1997
International Patent Classification (IPC) or national classification and IPC H04Q11/04		
Applicant INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS MACHINES CORPORATION et al.		
<p>1. This international preliminary examination report has been prepared by this International Preliminary Examining Authority and is transmitted to the applicant according to Article 36.</p> <p>2. This REPORT consists of a total of 7 sheets, including this cover sheet.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> This report is also accompanied by ANNEXES, i.e. sheets of the description, claims and/or drawings which have been amended and are the basis for this report and/or sheets containing rectifications made before this Authority (see Rule 70.16 and Section 607 of the Administrative Instructions under the PCT).</p> <p>These annexes consist of a total of 2 sheets.</p>		
<p>3. This report contains indications relating to the following items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">I <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Basis of the reportII <input type="checkbox"/> PriorityIII <input type="checkbox"/> Non-establishment of opinion with regard to novelty, inventive step and industrial applicabilityIV <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of unity of inventionV <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reasoned statement under Article 35(2) with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability; citations and explanations supporting such statementVI <input type="checkbox"/> Certain documents citedVII <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Certain defects in the international applicationVIII <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Certain observations on the international application		
Date of submission of the demand 14/12/1998	Date of completion of this report 25.10.1999	
Name and mailing address of the international preliminary examining authority:  European Patent Office D-80298 Munich Tel. +49 89 2399 - 0 Tx: 523656 epmu d Fax: +49 89 2399 - 4465	Authorized officer Nash, M Telephone No. +49 89 2399 2032 	

**INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY
EXAMINATION REPORT**

International application No. PCT/IB97/00893

I. Basis of the report

1. This report has been drawn on the basis of *(substitute sheets which have been furnished to the receiving Office in response to an invitation under Article 14 are referred to in this report as "originally filed" and are not annexed to the report since they do not contain amendments.)*:

Description, pages:

1-16 as originally filed

Claims, No.:

9,10 as originally filed

1-8 as received on 03/09/1999 with letter of 01/09/1999

Drawings, sheets:

1/9-9/9 as originally filed

2. The amendments have resulted in the cancellation of:

- ☐ the description, pages:
☐ the claims, Nos.:
☐ the drawings, sheets:

3. ☐ This report has been established as if (some of) the amendments had not been made, since they have been considered to go beyond the disclosure as filed (Rule 70.2(c)):

4. Additional observations, if necessary:

**INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY
EXAMINATION REPORT**

International application No. PCT/IB97/00893

V. Reasoned statement under Article 35(2) with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability; citations and explanations supporting such statement

1. Statement

Novelty (N)	Yes: Claims
	No: Claims 1-8
Inventive step (IS)	Yes: Claims
	No: Claims 1-8
Industrial applicability (IA)	Yes: Claims 1-8
	No: Claims

2. Citations and explanations

see separate sheet

VII. Certain defects in the international application

The following defects in the form or contents of the international application have been noted:

see separate sheet

VIII. Certain observations on the international application

The following observations on the clarity of the claims, description, and drawings or on the question whether the claims are fully supported by the description, are made:

see separate sheet

With respect to item V.

Reasoned statement under Article 35(2) with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability; citations and explanations supporting such statement

I

The following documents cited in the international search report have been considered for the purpose of this report:

D1: BOUDEC LE J -Y ET AL: 'CONNECTIONLESS DATA SERVICE IN AN ATM-BASED CUSTOMER PREMISES NETWORK', COMPUTER NETWORKS AND ISDN SYSTEMS, vol. 26, no. 11, 1 August 1994, pages 1409-1424, XP002012617

II

1. The subject-matter of Claim 1 is not novel in the sense of Article 33(1) and (2) PCT.

This can be seen with respect to document D1 (see in particular the passages cited in the international search report) that discloses according to the **all** features of Claim 1:

Multipoint-to-point (page 1418, left column, 2nd paragraph. See also section VIII with respect to clarity) *method of sending frames of data* (abstract) *from at least two sending nodes* (figure 5, switch 1 to 3) *via one or more forwarding nodes* (for example switch 2 and 3 for data coming from switch 1) *to one receiving node* (switch 4) *in an ATM network wherein each frame of data is partitioned into cells* (figure 2), *comprising the steps of:*
the sending nodes including a first label (figure 5; see cell header "4u") *into each of the cells representing an identification of the routing of the cell* (4u representing: switch 4, port u; figure 4; pages 1416 to 1417,

section "4.1. Direct ATM connectionless methods"; section "3.1 Method of B-ISDN connectionless service and SMDS" see discussion on destination address),

the sending nodes include a second label (figure 5, MID for example "m") into each of the cells representing an identification of the source of the cell (page 1418, left and right columns; section "3.1 Method of B-ISDN connectionless service and SMDS" see discussion on source address and on page 1219 the discussion on the identification of the source switch),

the forwarding node swaps both the first label associated with a forward direction and the second label associated with a backward direction using a swapping table (e.g. figure 5: m to m', m' to m" and 4u ->4s; pages 1417 to 1419, section "4.1.1. Direct connectionless service with MID swapping on trunks"; e.g. figure 6: 4 u → e1 uv → e2 uv → 1 v; page 1419, section "4.1.1. Direct connectionless service with VPC support"; see also the forwarding tables and the source table and destination table of the respective figures).

2. It should be noted that even if the Applicant were to interpret Claim 1 in such a manner as to enable him to allege that its subject-matter were novel, based on minor differences between features of this claim and those disclosed in D1, the subject-matter of Claim 1 would still not involve an inventive step, Articles 33(1) and (3) PCT, with respect to the disclosure of D1 especially as this document discloses the same object and the same type of solution as claimed in the claim. It is noted that variations for the swapping of labels are well known in the field of computer networks especially with respect to LANs. Thus the application of any such swapping technique to ATM networks is not considered to involve an inventive step but merely the application of known techniques to ATM networks. The Applicant is pointed to techniques of source routing and transparent routing and combinations thereof that are to be found in university text books.

Furthermore the multipoint-to-point functionality that the Applicant is seeking to claim has not induced the Applicant to add additional method steps to the claim thus implying that there is in fact no difference between a point-to-point connection and a multipoint-to-point which is thus implicit for the person skilled in

the art of communications. It is further noted that the transmission of two or more nodes via at least one forwarding node to one and the same destination node is explicitly discussed in D1: "destinations receive messages as sequences of possible interleaved cells, since several sources may send to the same destination at the same time" (page 1418).

3. The independent Claim 6, although phrased as an apparatus claim, is nonetheless a repetition of the subject-matter of method Claim 1. The same objection applies to this claim and the attention is thus drawn to the above points V.II.1 and 2.
4. The subject-matter of dependent Claims 2 to 5, 7 and 8 does not add anything of novel significance to the independent Claims 1 or 6 respectively, because the claims can be directly derived from the prior art document D1.

With respect to item VII.

Certain defects in the international application

1. To meet the requirements of Rule 6.3(b) PCT the independent claims should have been cast in the two-part form, with those features known in combination from the prior art (see document D1) being placed in a preamble (Rule 6.3(b)(i) PCT) and with the remaining features being included in a characterising part (Rule 6.3(b)(ii) PCT).
2. To fulfil the requirements of Rule 5.1(a)(ii) PCT, document D1 should have been identified in the description and the relevant background art disclosed therein briefly discussed.
3. The opening part of the description should have been brought into conformity with the amended independent claims (Rule 5.1(a)(iii) PCT).

Furthermore, following the disclosure of document D1, the statement indicating the technical problem to be solved by the invention (see page 3), required

revision, which should have been effected taking the requirements of Rule 5.1(a)(iii) PCT into account.

4. Reference signs placed in parentheses should have been inserted into all the claims to increase their intelligibility (Rule 6.2(b) PCT). This applies to both the preamble and the characterising portion.

With respect to item VIII.

Certain observations on the international application

1. Claim 1 (and the respective apparatus Claim 6) is not clear (Article 6 PCT) because of the introduction of the generic term "Multipoint-to-point transmission method" without specifying a single feature that is involved in such a multipoint-to-point connection. What features are necessary to allow such a transmission? Merely adding the generic term is simply adding a "desire to be achieved" without specifying the method steps that are involved (or the respective means of the apparatus that are necessary). See the problem to be solved in the description on page 2, last paragraph and page 3, first paragraph. This indicates that essential features are missing from the formulation of the claim.
2. In Claim 2 (and the respective apparatus Claim 7) we are dealing with **a single** (forwarding) node and thus **"a swapping table"** (from Claim 1) is always **"the same swapping table"** (from Claim 2) i.e. at present Claim 2 (Claim 7) is redundant since the subject-matter is already contained in Claim 1 (Claim 6). The claim is thus at present not concise rendering the application unclear (Article 6 PCT). It has been noted from the Applicant's reply dated 1/9/99 that the Applicant is seeking protection for the case in which a single (and identical) swapping table is used in both the forward direction and in the backward direction and for the case in which different (i.e. not identical) swapping tables are used in forward and backward directions. However it must be noted that at present this is not expressed by the wording of the Claims 1 and 2 (or Claims 6 and 7 respectively). Furthermore it is noted that the passage cited by the Applicant (page 16, last paragraph) is of such vague nature that it is not possible to formulate a clear claim based on the citation without contravening Article 19(2) PCT.

Revised Set of Claims (1.9.1999)

1. Multipoint-to-point transmission method for sending frames of data from at least two sending nodes via one or more forwarding nodes to one receiving node in an ATM network wherein each frame of data is partitioned into cells, comprising the steps of:

the sending nodes include a first label into each of the cells representing an identification of the routing of the cell,

the sending nodes include a second label into each of the cells representing an identification of the source of the cell,

the forwarding node swaps both the first label associated with a forward direction and the second label associated with a backward direction using a swapping table.

2. Method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of:

the forwarding node swaps the first and the second label according to the same swapping table.

3. Method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of:

with respect to the second label, the forwarding node enters the swapping table in the column of the output labels and reads the corresponding input label.

4. Method according to claim 1 or claim 3, further comprising the step of:

the swapping of the second label is carried out for the same ports of the respective forwarding node as for the first label.

5. Method according to one of claims 1 to 4, further comprising the step of:

the first label is written in and read from the VPI field of the respective cell and the second label is written in and read from the VCI field of the respective cell.

6. Apparatus for sending frames of data in a multipoint-to-point fashion from at least two sending nodes via one or more forwarding nodes to one receiving node in an ATM network wherein each frame of data is partitioned into cells, comprising:

in the sending nodes, means for including a first label into each of the cells representing an identification of the routing of the cell,

in the sending nodes, means for including a second label into each of the cells representing an identification of the source of the cell,

in the forwarding node, means for swapping both the first label associated with a forward direction and the second label associated with a backward direction using a swapping table.

7. Apparatus according to claim 6, further comprising:

in the forwarding node, means for swapping the first and the second label according to the same swapping table.

8. Apparatus according to claim 7, further comprising:

in the forwarding node, means for entering the swapping table in the column of the output labels and means for reading the corresponding input label.

PATENT COOPERATION TREATY

09/230-99

PCT

NOTIFICATION OF ELECTION

(PCT Rule 61.2)

From the INTERNATIONAL BUREAU

To:

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ÉTATS-UNIS D'AMÉRIQUE

in its capacity as elected Office

Date of mailing:

28 January 1999 (28.01.99)

International application No.:

PCT/IB97/00893

Applicant's or agent's file reference:

SZ9-97-009

International filing date:

17 July 1997 (17.07.97)

Priority date:

Applicant:

DROZ, Patrick et al

1. The designated Office is hereby notified of its election made:



in the demand filed with the International preliminary Examining Authority on:

14 December 1998 (14.12.98)



in a notice effecting later election filed with the International Bureau on:

2. The election ☒ was



was not

made before the expiration of 19 months from the priority date or, where Rule 32 applies, within the time limit under Rule 32.2(b).

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Authorized officer:

J. Zahra

Telephone No.: (41-22) 338.83.38

AP

INTERNET COOPERATION TREATY

PCT

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

(PCT Article 18 and Rules 43 and 44)

Applicant's or agent's file reference SZ9-97-009	FOR FURTHER ACTION see Notification of Transmittal of International Search Report (Form PCT/ISA/220) as well as, where applicable, item 5 below.	
International application No. PCT/IB 97/00893	International filing date (day/month/year) 17/07/1997	(Earliest) Priority Date (day/month/year)
Applicant INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS MACHINES CORPORATION et al.		

This International Search Report has been prepared by this International Searching Authority and is transmitted to the applicant according to Article 18. A copy is being transmitted to the International Bureau.

This International Search Report consists of a total of 3 sheets.

☒ It is also accompanied by a copy of each prior art document cited in this report.

1. ☐ **Certain claims were found unsearchable** (see Box I).

2. ☐ **Unity of invention is lacking** (see Box II).

3. ☐ The international application contains disclosure of a **nucleotide and/or amino acid sequence listing** and the international search was carried out on the basis of the sequence listing

☐ filed with the international application.

☐ furnished by the applicant separately from the international application.

☐ but not accompanied by a statement to the effect that it did not include matter going beyond the disclosure in the international application as filed.

☐ Transcribed by this Authority

4. With regard to the **title**, ☒ the text is approved as submitted by the applicant

☐ the text has been established by this Authority to read as follows:

5. With regard to the **abstract**,

☒ the text is approved as submitted by the applicant

☐ the text has been established, according to Rule 38.2(b), by this Authority as it appears in Box III. The applicant may, within one month from the date of mailing of this International Search Report, submit comments to this Authority.

6. The figure of the **drawings** to be published with the abstract is:

Figure No. 1h ☒ as suggested by the applicant.

☐ because the applicant failed to suggest a figure.

☐ because this figure better characterizes the invention.

☐ None of the figures.

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No

PCT/IB 97/00893

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC 6 H04Q11/04 H04L12/56

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC 6 H04L

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	BOUDEC LE J -Y ET AL: "CONNECTIONLESS DATA SERVICE IN AN ATM-BASED CUSTOMER PREMISES NETWORK" COMPUTER NETWORKS AND ISDN SYSTEMS, vol. 26, no. 11, 1 August 1994, pages 1409-1424, XP002012617 * section 3.3 * * section 4.1 *	1,6,7
Y	--- LUTAS D ET AL: "MULTIPROCESSOR SYSTEM FOR INTERCONNECTION OF ETHERNET AND FDDI NETWORKS USING ATM VIA SATELLITE" IEE PROCEEDINGS: COMPUTERS AND DIGITAL TECHNIQUES, vol. 143, no. 1, 1 January 1996, pages 69-78, XP000554822 * section 3.3 * see figure 8 --- -/--	1,6,7

☒ Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.☒ Patent family members are listed in annex.

* Special categories of cited documents:

"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance

"E" earlier document but published on or after the international filing date

"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)

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"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention

"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone

"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art.

"&" document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search

8 April 1998

Date of mailing of the international search report

17/04/1998

Name and mailing address of the ISA

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Authorized officer

Gregori, S

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No

PCT/IB 97/00893

C.(Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	US 5 440 547 A (ESAKI HIROSHI ET AL) 8 August 1995 see column 4, line 13 - line 43; figure 33C	1-10
A	GB 2 269 724 A (PLESSEY TELECOMM) 16 February 1994 see claims 1-3,6	1-10

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International Application No

PCT/IB 97/00893

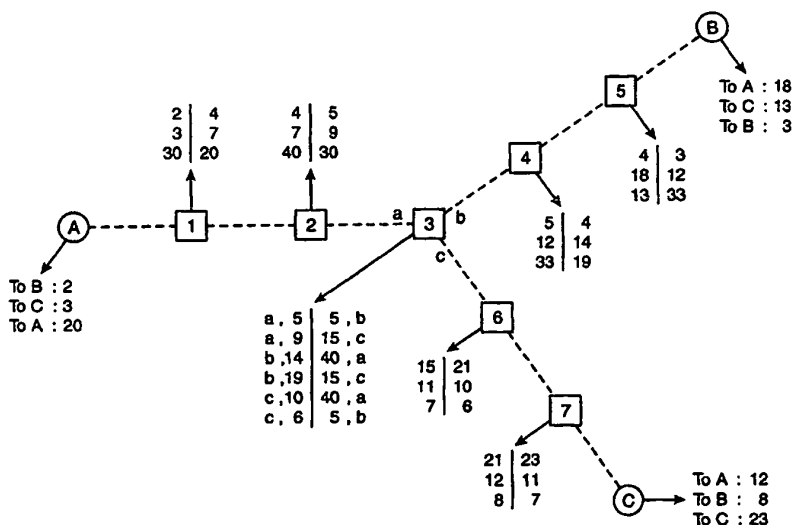
Patent document cited in search report	Publication date	Patent family member(s)	Publication date
US 5440547 A	08-08-95	JP 6318951 A	15-11-94
		JP 6261094 A	16-09-94
<hr/>			
GB 2269724 A	16-02-94	DE 4326795 A	17-03-94
<hr/>			



INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

<p>(51) International Patent Classification ⁶ : H04Q 11/04, H04L 12/56</p>	<p>A1</p>	<p>(11) International Publication Number: WO 99/04595</p> <p>(43) International Publication Date: 28 January 1999 (28.01.99)</p>
<p>(21) International Application Number: PCT/IB97/00893</p> <p>(22) International Filing Date: 17 July 1997 (17.07.97)</p> <p>(71) Applicant (for all designated States except US): INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS MACHINES CORPORATION [US/US]; Old Orchard Road, Armonk, NY 10504 (US).</p> <p>(72) Inventors; and</p> <p>(75) Inventors/Applicants (for US only): DROZ, Patrick [CH/CH]; Talackerstrasse 81, CH-8152 Glattbrugg (CH). GOREN, Gilad [IL/IL]; Nahalal 27, 10600 D.N. Emek Izre'el (IL). ILIADIS, Ilias [GR/CH]; Schloss-Strasse 29, CH-8803 Rüschlikon (CH).</p> <p>(74) Agent: HEUSCH, Christian; International Business Machines Corporation, Saeumerstrasse 4, CH-8803 Rüschlikon (CH).</p>		<p>(81) Designated States: JP, US, European patent (AT, BE, CH, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE).</p> <p>Published With international search report.</p>

(54) Title: METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR MULTIPOINT-TO-POINT TRANSMISSION IN AN ATM NETWORK



(57) Abstract

A method is described for sending frames of data from at least two sending nodes via one or more forwarding nodes to one receiving node in an ATM network. Each frame of data is partitioned into cells and includes a VPI field and a VCI field. The sending nodes include a first label into the VPI field of each of the cells representing an identification of the routing of the cell. Furthermore, the sending nodes include a second label into the VCI field of each of the cells representing an identification of the source of the cell. The forwarding node swaps the first and the second label according to a swapping table. With respect to the second label, the forwarding node enters the swapping table in the column of the output labels and reads the corresponding input label.

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Method and Apparatus for Multipoint-to-Point Transmission in an ATM Network

Description:

The invention relates to a method and an apparatus for sending frames of data from at least two sending nodes via one or more forwarding nodes to one receiving node in an ATM network wherein each frame of data is partitioned into cells.

ATM (asynchronous transfer mode) networks are well known and wide-spread over the world. In an ATM network, the data to be transferred is put together in a frame which consists of a number of cells. The number of the cells depends on the amount of data to be transferred. Each of the cells includes 48 bytes data information and 5 bytes control information. The control information carries all necessary information for transferring the cell from its source to a desired destination. The control information includes a VPI (virtual path identifier) field and a VCI (virtual channel identifier) field.

The cells are sent from the sending or source node via a number of nodes to the receiving or destination node. Usually, the VPI field identifies the desired path of the data. This is accomplished by labels which are written into the VPI field and which are swapped by each node. The swapping is based on swapping tables which are created by a resource manager during the establishment of a new path or during the introduction of a new node and which are present in each node. Such a swapping table includes the label of the incoming VPI field, a new label for the outgoing VPI field and the respective input and output port.

When a cell arrives at an input port of a node, the label of the VPI field of the incoming cell is read and searched for in

the swapping table of the node. Then, the corresponding label for the VPI field of the outgoing cell is read from the swapping table and is written into the VPI field of the outgoing cell. And then, the cell is sent to the respective output port of the node which is mentioned in the swapping table.

The connection between a source and a destination is called a point-to-point connection. There is only one path without any spreading or merging of other paths. As mentioned, any such point-to-point connection is carried out by swapping the label of the VPI field in each node.

Another possibility is a point-to-multipoint connection. In this case, one source broadcasts the same data to a number of destinations. For that purpose, the ATM network provides a SETUP message and an ADD PARTY message. With the SETUP message, a point-to-point connection is established. Then, with the ADD PARTY message, it is possible to add further destinations to this point-to-point connection and to thereby build up the point-to-multipoint connection. As there is only one single source, no problem arises in the destinations to combine the frame originally sent from this single source out of the received cells.

It is also possible to reverse the point-to-multipoint connection into a multipoint-to-point connection. For this purpose, a reverse flag may be included in the SETUP message and in the ADD PARTY message.

Such a multipoint-to-point connection includes at least two sending nodes which are followed by forwarding nodes and only one receiving node. Thereby, the data to be transferred is merged together from the number of sources to the single destination. This has the consequence that cells from different sources may be interleaved when they are merged together. The cells arriving at the single destination are

therefore mixed with respect to their different sources and have to be reassembled appropriately. Therefore, a mechanism is needed to reassemble the cells from the different sources correctly in the single destination.

A first mechanism is that each forwarding node collects all cells that arrive on a specific input port until the node has collected all cells of one and the same frame. Then, these collected cells are forwarded to the next downstream node continuously, i.e. no other cells from other sources are interleaved. Using this mechanism, the cells are not mixed and it is possible to reassemble the frames sent by the different sources as these frames arrive continuously at the single destination. However, this mechanism has the disadvantage that it introduces a significant delay in the transfer of the data. As well, this mechanism requires additional memory in the forwarding nodes.

In another mechanism, the VCI field of a cell is used to identify the particular source of the cell. Each source is assigned with a globally unique value which is then included by the source in the VCI field of each cell to be sent by the source. Due to the unique configuration, all cells arriving at a destination and having an identical value may then be reassembled into the same frame. This mechanism does not introduce a delay but it requires a globally unique assignment of values for the VCI field which is practically very difficult to guarantee.

It is therefore an object of the invention to provide a method and an apparatus for a multipoint-to-point connection to reassemble the cells from the different sources effectively in the single destination.

In a method as described above, the invention solves this object by the steps of: the sending nodes include a first label into each of the cells representing an identification of

the routing of the cell, the sending nodes include a second label into each of the cells representing an identification of the source of the cell, the forwarding node swaps the first and the second label according to a swapping table.

The first label is responsive for the routing of the cell, i.e. the cell finds its path to the desired destination with the help of the first label. Additionally, the second label carries the identification of the source from which the cell comes from. Both cells are swapped in each node with the result that, at the destination, the cell still includes these two labels. The first label has done its duty as the cell has arrived at the desired destination. However, the second label still carries the identification of the source of the cell so that the destination is now able to check from where the cell is coming.

If, in a multipoint-to-point connection, a number of cells of different frames from different sources interleave in merging nodes inbetween the sources and the single destination, the destination is able to differentiate the cells with respect to their different sources with the help of the second label. Therefore, the destination is able to reassemble the cells of the different frames correctly.

The described method according to the invention does not need any additional memory in the forwarding nodes. As well, there is no delay in the forwarding nodes. And it is also not necessary to create globally unique identifications for the nodes. It is sufficient to include the second label in the cells and to swap this second label in the forwarding nodes. Then, the destination is able to differentiate the cells of the different sources with the help of this second label.

In an advantageous embodiment of the invention, the forwarding node swaps the first and the second label according to the same swapping table. As a result, it is not necessary to

create an additional swapping table for the second label. Instead, the first and the second label use the same swapping table which has to be created for the first label.

In another advantageous embodiment of the invention, the forwarding node swaps the first label in a forward direction and the second label in a backward direction. By swapping the second label in a backward direction, a simulation is executed in which a simulated cell is transferred from the actual destination to the actual source. If the actual cell arrives at the actual destination, the simulated cell arrives at the source. As a consequence, the second label of the actual cell carries the identification of the source when the actual cell arrives at the destination. As already described, the destination is then able to check from where the cell is coming from with the help of the second label.

In another advantageous embodiment of the invention, with respect of the second label, the forwarding node enters the swapping table in the column of the output labels and reads the corresponding input label. Usually, the swapping table is entered in a forward direction, i.e. it is entered in the column of the input labels and the corresponding output label is read out. This is valid for the first label. However, as already described, the second label is swapped in a backward direction. This means that the swapping table is entered in the column of the output labels and the corresponding input label is read out. By using this backward swapping in connection with the second label, the above described simulation is carried out. Due to the backward swapping, the simulated cell is transferred from the actual destination to the actual source with the result that the second label carries the identification of the source when the actual cell arrives at the destination.

In another advantageous embodiment of the invention, the swapping of the second label is carried out for the same ports

of the respective forwarding node as for the first label. In particular in a multipoint-to-point connection, it is possible that the swapping table includes several identical labels in the column of the output labels. In order to enter the correct label of the column of the output labels, the used ports of the respective node are checked. These ports may also be included in the swapping table or may be stored in any other manner. It is then checked which ports of the respective node belong to the first label, i.e. on which port the cell came in and on which port the cell will leave the node. Then, the column of the output labels is checked for that output label which belongs to the same port connection. Finally, this output label is entered and the corresponding input label is read out of the swapping table in the described backward direction.

In another advantageous embodiment of the invention, the first label is written in and read from the VPI field of the respective cell and the second label is written in and read from the VCI field of the respective cell. In other words, the VPI field is used as usual for the first label and the VCI field is used to carry the second label. As a result, no additional fields or the like are necessary to carry the second label.

Further advantages of the invention become apparent from the following description of an embodiment of the invention which is shown in the figures of the drawing.

Figures

1a to 1h show schematic diagrams of an ATM network with ten nodes, and
figure 2 shows a schematic diagram of another ATM network.

Figure 1a shows an ATM network with three nodes A, B, C which are connected via seven further nodes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. Nodes A, B, C act as sources/destinations, respectively, by

being a sender of data or by being a receiver of data. Nodes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 act as forwarding nodes.

The nodes 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 of figure 1a have only two ports, respectively. Therefore, for the purpose of simplicity, the ports are not identified. It is assumed that the nodes 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 forward the received data to the respective next node in each direction. Of course, it is possible that the nodes 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 have more than two ports which then would have to be identified and managed as described in connection with node 3.

Node 3 is a merging point and has three ports a, b, c.

The data transferred on the ATM network of figure 1a is partitioned into frames, i.e. all data to be transferred from a source to a destination is included in one frame. The protocol for these transfers is e.g. the Internet Protocol IP.

Each frame consists of a number of cells. The data to be transferred is partitioned into these cells. Each cell carries 48 bytes data information and 5 bytes control information. The control information includes a virtual path identifier VPI field which identifies in particular the destination to which the data has to be transferred. Furthermore, the control information includes a virtual channel identifier VCI field.

In figure 1b, the nodes A, B, C of the ATM network of figure 1a are assigned with starting labels. For example, if a cell has to be transferred from node A to node C, the starting label would have to be "3". Or if a cell has to be transferred from node B to node C, the starting label would have to be "13". The starting label to the node itself, i.e. the starting label "23" in node C identifies the node C as such.

In figure 1c, swapping tables are included for each of the nodes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. As the nodes 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 have

only two ports, respectively, no port information is included in the swapping tables of these nodes 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7. These swapping tables, therefore, include in the left column an input label and in the right column a corresponding output label.

As the node 3 has the three ports a, b, c, the swapping table of port 3 includes additional port information. In the left column, the input port and an input label are included and in the right column a corresponding output port and a corresponding output label are included.

These swapping tables are created during the establishment of the ATM network. The swapping tables may be changed when a new node or when a new connection is added. The labels of the swapping tables define the path of a cell from its source to its destination.

The labels are included in the VPI field of a cell. When the cell is transferred from one node to the next node, the output label of the one node is sent to the next node and is received there as the input label. Then, the label is swapped and sent to the next node, etc..

Figure 1c shows the changes of the labels when a cell is sent from node A to node B. The starting label in node A to node B is "2". In node 1, the input label "2" is swapped to the output label "4". In node 2, the input label "4" is swapped to the output label "5". In node 3, the input port "a" and the input label "5" is swapped to the output label "5" and the output port "b". Then, in node 4, the input label "5" is swapped to the output label "4" and in node 5 to the output label "3". This output label "3" identifies the node B.

Figure 1d shows the changes of the labels when a cell is sent from node A to node C. Figure 1e shows the changes of the labels when a cell is sent from node B to node A. Figure 1f

shows the changes of the labels when a cell is sent from node B to node C. Figure 1g shows the changes of the labels when a cell is sent from node C to node A. Figure 1h shows the changes of the labels when a cell is sent from node C to node B.

It is assumed that a multipoint-to-point connection from node A and node B to node C is established in the ATM network of figure 1h.

With respect to a first cell of a first frame of data starting from node A and running to node C, the labels of this first cell are swapped as follows:

A -> C: 3 -> node 1 -> 7 -> node 2 -> 9 -> node 3 -> 15
 -> node 6 -> 21 -> node 7 -> 23.

With respect to a second cell of a second frame of data starting from node B and running to node C, the labels of this second cell are swapped as follows:

B -> C: 13 -> node 5 -> 33 -> node 4 -> 19 -> node 3 -> 15
 -> node 6 -> 21 -> node 7 -> 23.

As a consequence, all incoming cells in node C have the label "23". Therefore, it is not possible to differentiate whether the received cells belong to the first or the second frame, i.e. from which source the cells come from. If the cells of the first and the second frame from node A and node B are interleaved in the merging node 3, then it is not possible to reassemble the correct first and second frame in the receiving node C.

According to the invention, a second label is included additionally in the cell to be transferred. This label identifies the source of the respective cell. The label is included in the VCI field of the cell.

In the above example of a multipoint-to-point connection from node A and node B to node C, the first label is included in the VPI field as described. Furthermore, the identification of the sending node is included as the second label. This second label is then swapped according to the swapping tables in the nodes, however, in a backward direction. This means that the respective swapping table is entered in the column of the output label and the corresponding input label is read out.

With respect to a first cell of a first frame of data starting from node A and running to node C, the labels of this first cell are swapped as follows:

A -> C: 3/20 -> node 1 -> 7/30 -> node 2 -> 9/40 -> ... ,
 wherein the first figure relates to the first label
 and the second figure relates to the second label.

For example, the swapping table of node 2 is entered with the first label in the VPI field in a usual forward direction so that the first label changes from "7" to "9". In the same node 2, the swapping table is entered with respect to the second label of the VCI field in a backward direction, i.e. from the output label to the input label. This results in a change of the second label from "30" to "40".

In node 3, the swapping table includes e.g. two output labels "5" in the backward direction with respect to the second label so that it would not be clear which input label is correct. In this case, the information about the input port and the output port has to be used. In particular, that output label has to be used which relates to the same input/output port connection as the first label.

In the above example, the first label "9" would be swapped according to the swapping table of node 3 to the label "15". Furthermore, the swapping table of node 3 includes the information that the input port a and the output port c belong

to this swapping of the first label. The second label "40" exists twice as an output label in the swapping table of node 3. However, only one of these two output labels belongs to the input/output port connection from port a to port c. This output label is selected and, in a backward direction, the corresponding input label is read which is "10".

As a result, the labels of the above mentioned first cell starting from node A and running to node C are swapped as follows:

A -> C: 3/20 -> node 1 -> 7/30 -> node 2 -> 9/40
 -> node 3 -> 15/10 -> node 6 -> 21/11
 -> node 7 -> 23/12.

With respect to a second cell of a second frame of data starting from node B and running to node C, the labels of this second cell are swapped as follows:

B -> C: 13/3 -> node 5 -> 33/4 -> node 4 -> 19/5
 -> node 3 -> 15/6 -> node 6 -> 21/7
 -> node 7 -> 23/8.

The cells arriving at node C therefore include either the labels 23/12 or the labels 23/8. The first label "23" is equal for both cells. However, the second label is different. The cells coming from node A carry the second label "12" whereas the cells coming from node B carry the second label "8". The label "12" is the starting label to node A from node C and the label "8" is the starting label to node B from node C.

As a consequence, the node C is able to differentiate the arriving cells with respect to different sources. The cells with the second label "12" belong to the node A and the cells with the second label "8" belong to node B. Interleaved cells may therefore be reassembled correctly with the help of the second label.

The above method is described in connection with a symmetric ATM network. However, the method also applies in the case of an asymmetric ATM network as described now.

Figure 2 shows an ATM network with five nodes A, B, C, D, E which are connected via six further nodes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. Nodes A, B, C, D, E act as sources/destinations, respectively, by being a sender of data or by being a receiver of data. Nodes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 act as forwarding nodes. Node 1 has two ports u, f, node 2 has three ports x, y, z, node 3 has four ports a, b, c, d, node 4 has one port v, node 5 has one port w and node 6 has three ports g, h, m.

In order to establish the ATM network shown in figure 2, the nodes 1, 4, 5 sent establishment messages to their neighbors. These messages include the identification of the respective nodes A, B, C, D, E and a starting label as follows:

node 1:	A,1	B,2
node 4:	C,10	
node 5:	D,1	E,10.

When such an establishment message reaches one of the neighbor nodes on one of its ports, this node marks the input port and then generates its own establishment message for the respective node 1, 4, 5 and sends it out on the correct port. This output port is also stored in the node.

It is now assumed that the paths originated by node A and node B reach node 3 via node 6 and the paths destined to node A and node B are routed via node 2.

Then, node 2 forwards the following establishment messages to port y:

node 2:	A,10	B,11.
---------	------	-------

Node 3 sends the following establishment messages:

```
node 3:   A,10      B,21      to ports b, c, d
          C,12      to ports a, c, d
          D,13      E,14      to ports a, b, c.
```

And node 6 forwards the following establishment messages to port g and port m:

```
node 6:   C,1      E,3.
```

Now, the swapping tables of node 3, node 2 and node 6 have the following structure wherein the left column includes the input labels, the middle column includes the output labels and the right column includes the output ports:

```
node 3:   10  10  a      (-> A)
          21  11  a      (-> B)
          12  10  b      (-> C)
          13   1  d      (-> D)
          14  10  d      (-> E)

node 2:   10   1  x      (-> A)
          11   2  x      (-> B)

node 6:    1  12  h      (-> C)
          2  13  h      (-> D)
          3  14  h      (-> E).
```

At the nodes 1, 4, 5, the virtual circuits directly go to the IP layer. Therefore, the swapping tables of the nodes 1, 4, 5 have the following structure wherein a hyphen stands for a virtual circuit which starts or ends at the respective node:

```
node 1:    1   -   -      (-> A)
          2   -   -      (-> B)
          -   1   f      (-> C)
```

```

- 2 f      (-> D)
- 3 f      (-> E)

node 4:    - 10 v      (-> A)
           - 21 v      (-> B)
10 - -      (-> C)
           - 13 v      (-> D)
           - 14 v      (-> E)

node 5:    - 10 w      (-> A)
           - 21 w      (-> B)
           - 12 w      (-> C)
1 - -      (-> D)
10 - -      (-> E).

```

When the establishment messages initiated by the nodes A and B reach the nodes 4 and 5, reverse establishment messages are generated as follows:

```

node 4:    rC,10                to port v

node 5:    rD,1      rE,10      to port w.

```

Then, node 3 forwards establishment messages on the same port at which the forward establishment messages arrived originally, i.e. on port a, as follows:

```

node 3:    rC,12 rD,13 rE,14.

```

Finally, node 2 forwards establishment messages on port x as follows:

```

node 2:    rC,41 rD,42 rE,43.

```

In the same manner, reverse establishment messages are created when the original establishment messages initiated by node C, node D and node E arrive at node 1 as follows:

node 1: rA,1 rB,2 to port f.

Then, node 6 forwards establishment messages as follows:

node 6: rA,10 rB,52 to port h.

This has the result that the swappping tables are expanded as follows:

node 3: 10 10 c (<- A)
 21 52 c (<- B)
 12 10 b (<->C)
 13 1 d (<->D)
 14 10 d (<->E)

node 2: 41 12 y (<- C)
 42 13 y (<- D)
 43 14 y (<- E)

node 6: 10 1 g (<- A)
 52 2 g (<- B)

node 1: - 41 u (<- C)
 - 42 u (<- D)
 - 43 u (<- E).

When a cell is sent from node A to node D, it passes through node 1, node 6, node 3 and node 5. In these nodes 1, 6, 3, 5, the first label included in the VPI field and the second label included in the VCI field of the respective cell are swapped as follows:

A -> D: node 1 -> 2/1 -> node 6 -> 13/10 -> node 3
 -> 1/10 -> node 5.

When at the same time a cell is sent from node C to node D, it passes through node 4, node 3 and node 5. In these nodes 4, 3,

5, the first label and the second label are swapped as follows:

C -> D: node 4 -> 13/10 -> node 3 -> 1/12 -> node 5.

The first label of the cells coming from node A and node C have the same label "1" when they arrive at node 5. This is the identification of the destination in node 5, i.e. node D. However, the second label of the cells is different. The second label of the cell coming from node A is "10" and the second label of the cell coming from node C is "12". In node 5, the label "10" is the identification of node A and the label "12" is the identification of node C.

Therefore, node 5 is able to differentiate the cells coming from node A and from node C and to reassemble the respective frames correctly.

According to the above examples of ATM networks shown in figures 1a to 1h and in figure 2, the second label relating to the source of the respective cell is written into and read out of the VCI field of the cell. Alternatively, it is also possible to use only a part of the VCI field, in particular one byte of the VCI field, for the second label. As well, it is possible to use two bytes of the 48 bytes of the cell which usually carry the information in order to carry the first and the second labels. This last possibility may be required for very large networks where 16 bits per label are necessary.

According to the above examples, the swapping tables are stored in the nodes. Alternatively, it is also possible to store several swapping tables in the ports of the nodes.

Claims:

1. Method for sending frames of data from at least two sending nodes via one or more forwarding nodes to one receiving node in an ATM network wherein each frame of data is partitioned into cells, comprising the steps of:

the sending nodes include a first label into each of the cells representing an identification of the routing of the cell,

the sending nodes include a second label into each of the cells representing an identification of the source of the cell,

the forwarding node swaps the first and the second label according to a swapping table.

2. Method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of:

the forwarding node swaps the first and the second label according to the same swapping table.

3. Method according to claim 1 or claim 2, further comprising the step of:

the forwarding node swaps the first label in a forward direction and the second label in a backward direction.

4. Method according to claim 3, further comprising the step of:

with respect to the second label, the forwarding node enters the swapping table in the column of the output labels and reads the corresponding input label.

5. Method according to claim 3 or claim 4, further comprising the step of:

the swapping of the second label is carried out for the same ports of the respective forwarding node as for the first label.

6. Method according to one of claims 1 to 5, further comprising the step of:

the first label is written in and read from the VPI field of the respective cell and the second label is written in and read from the VCI field of the respective cell.

7. Apparatus for sending frames of data from at least two sending nodes via one or more forwarding nodes to one receiving node in an ATM network wherein each frame of data is partitioned into cells, comprising:

in the sending nodes, means for including a first label into each of the cells representing an identification of the routing of the cell,

in the sending nodes, means for including a second label into each of the cells representing an identification of the source of the cell,

in the forwarding node, means for swapping the first and the second label according to a swapping table.

8. Apparatus according to claim 7, further comprising:

in the forwarding node, means for swapping the first and the second label according to the same swapping table.

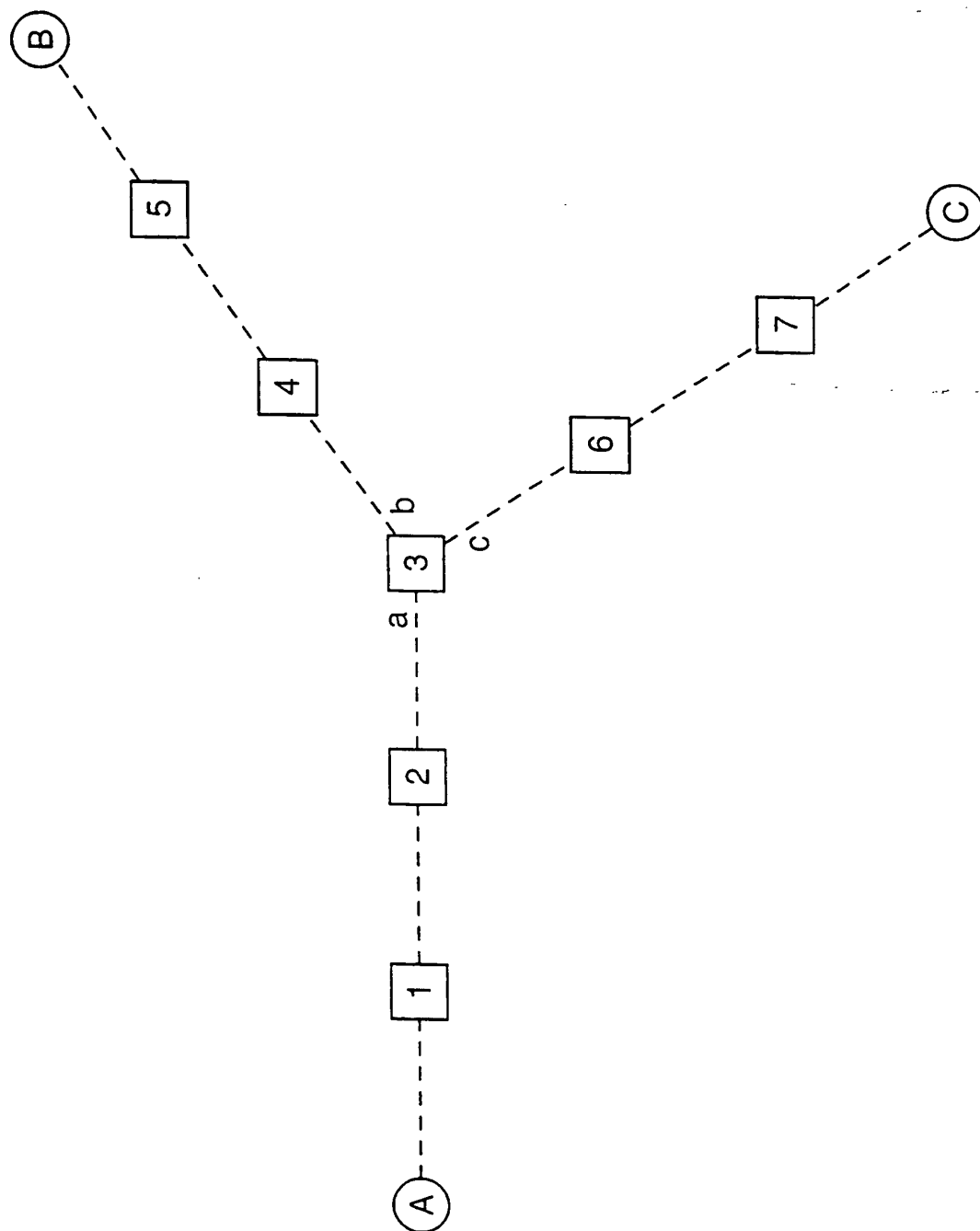
9. Apparatus according to claim 7 or claim 8, further comprising:

in the forwarding node, means for swapping the first label in a forward direction and the second label in a backward direction.

10. Apparatus according to claim 9, further comprising:

in the forwarding node, means for entering the swapping table in the column of the output labels and means for reading the corresponding input label.

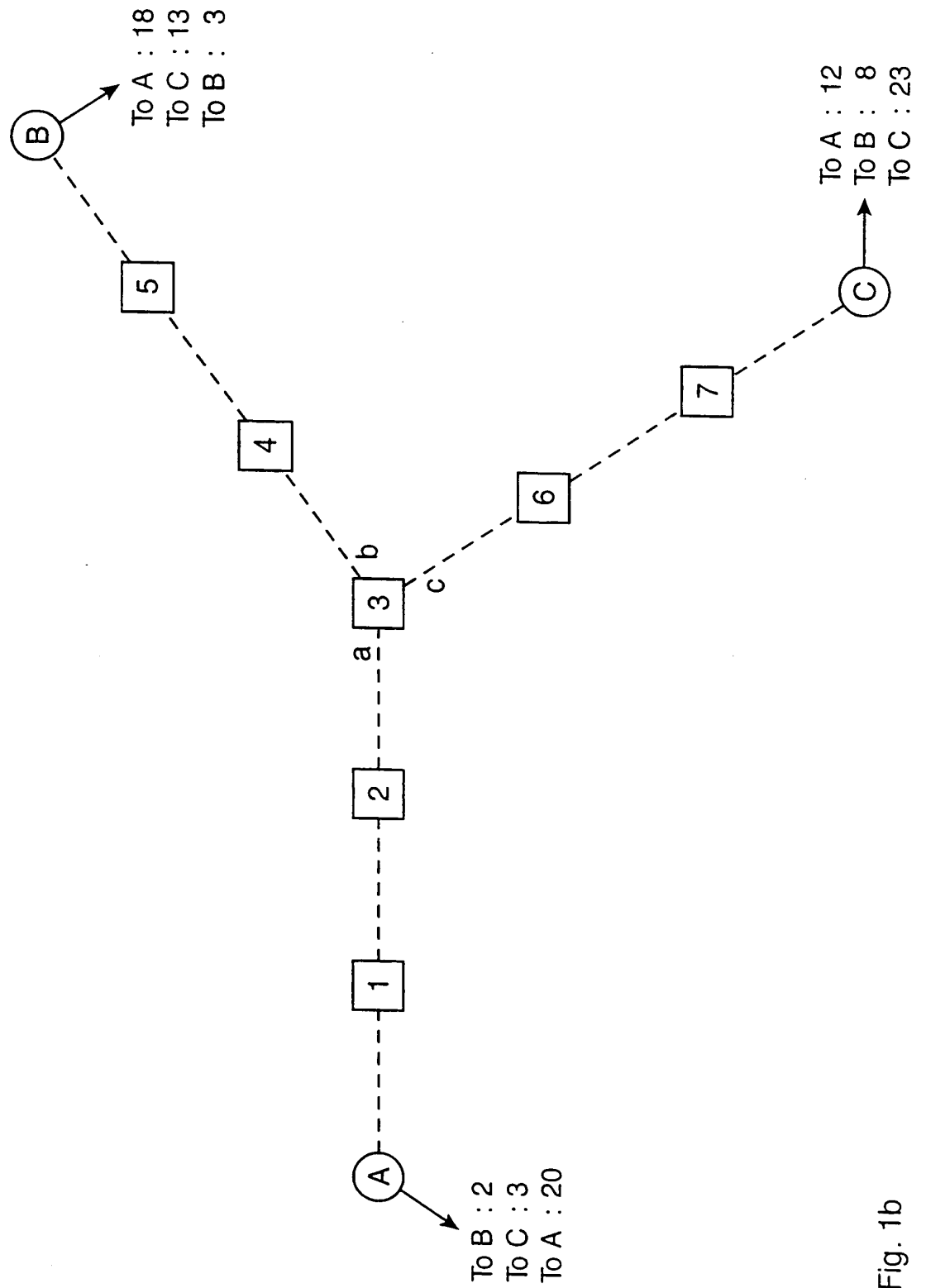
1/9



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.1a

2/9



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Fig. 1b

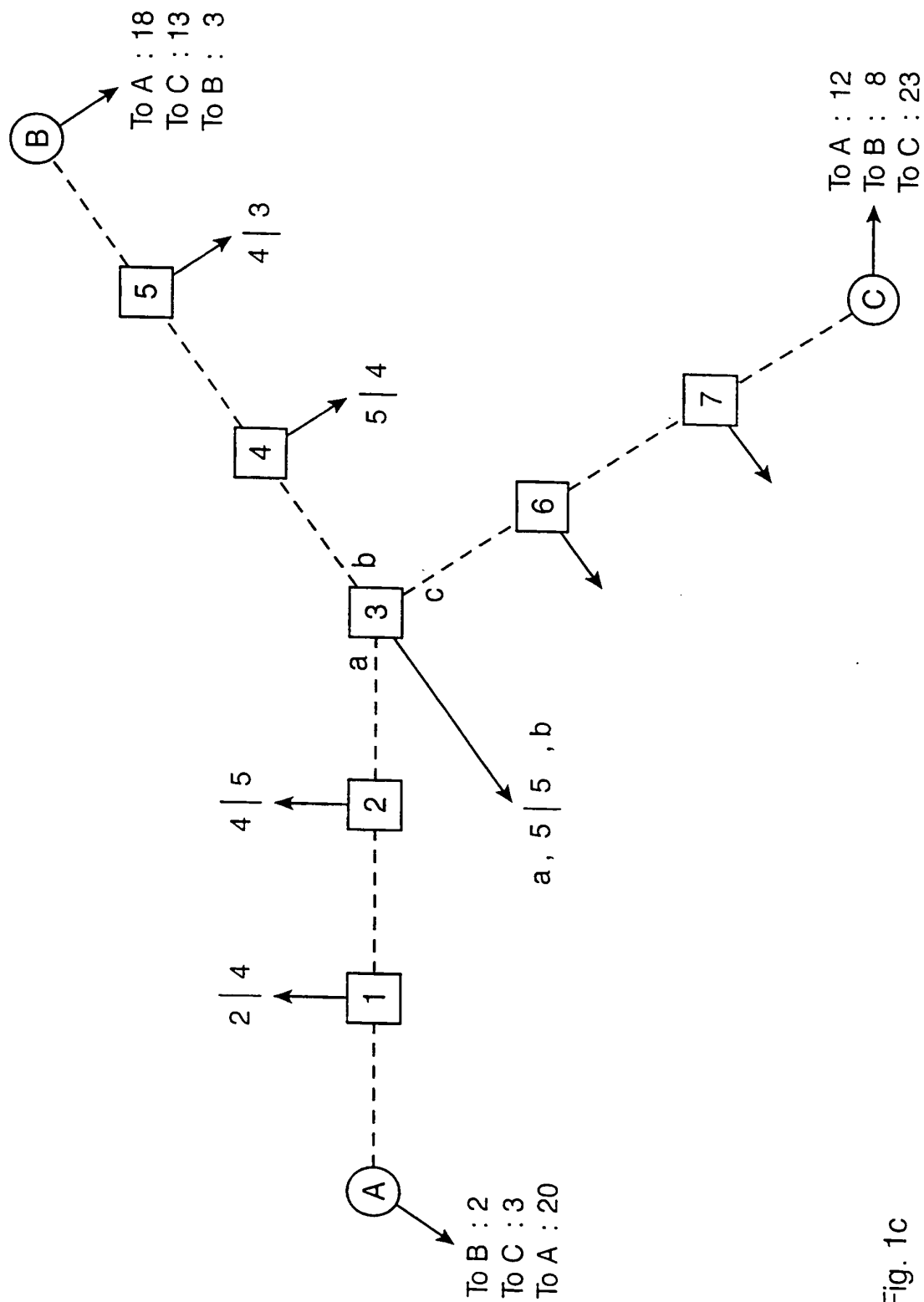
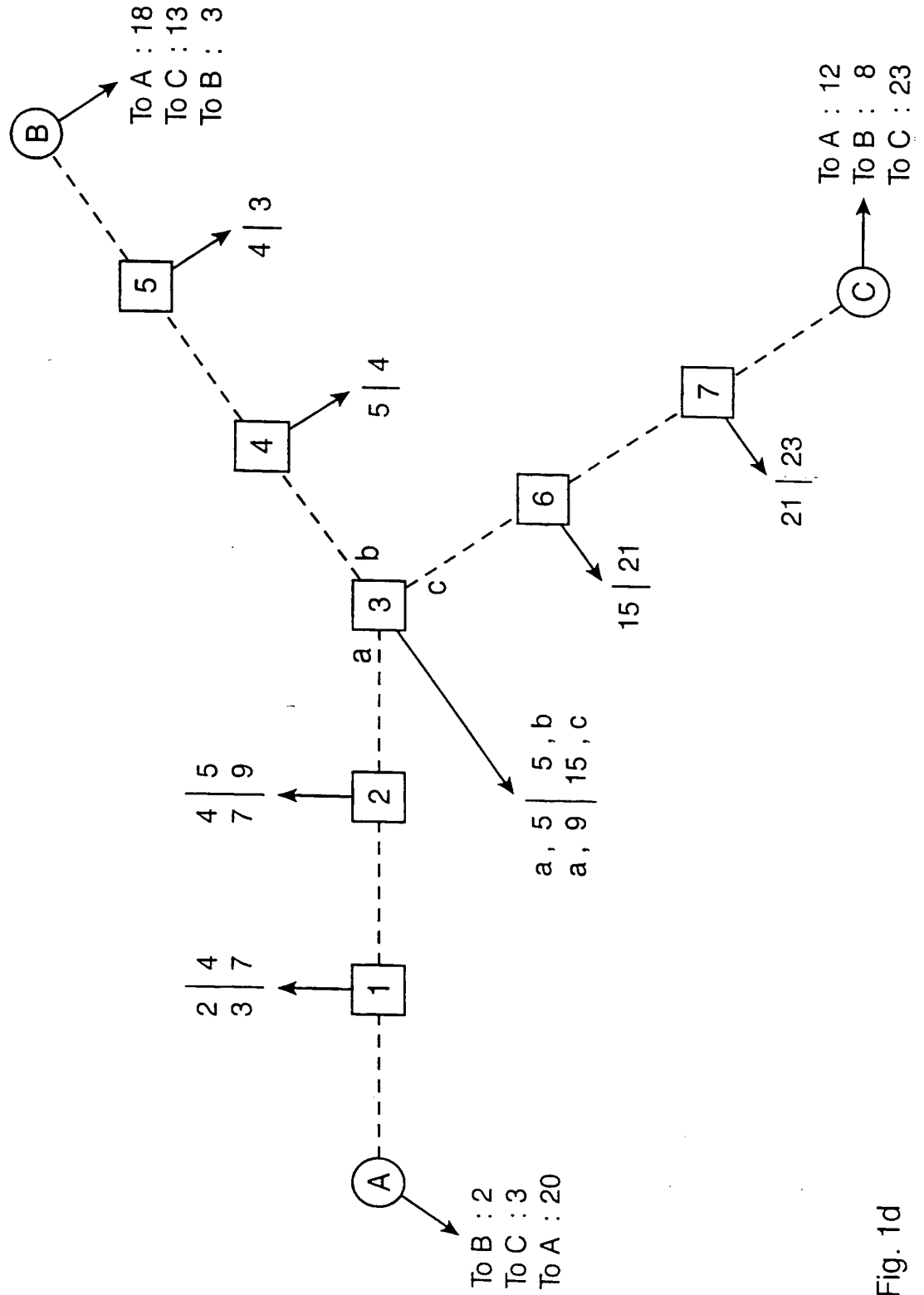


Fig. 1c



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Fig. 1d

5/9

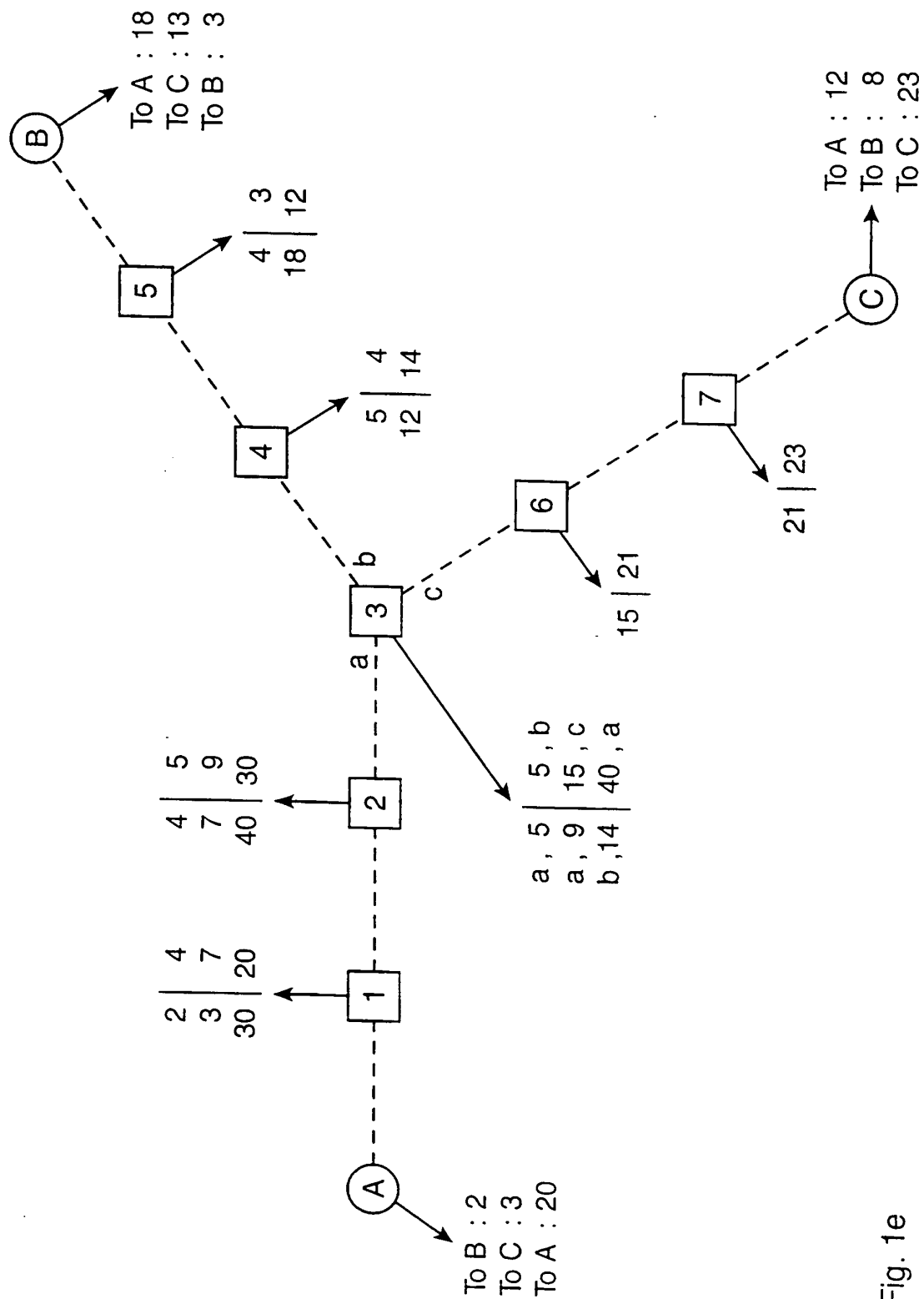
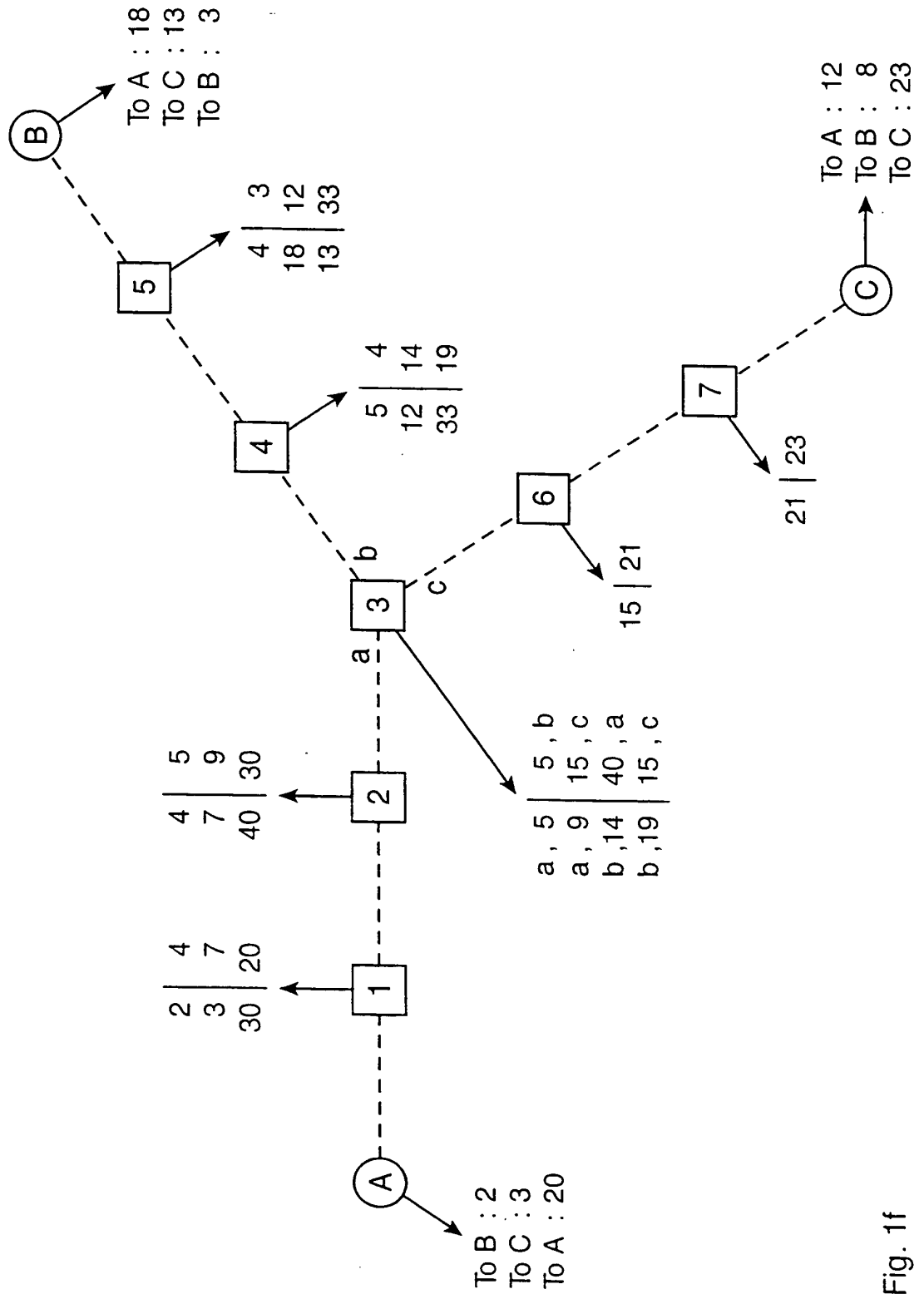


Fig. 1e

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6/9



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Fig. 1f

7/9

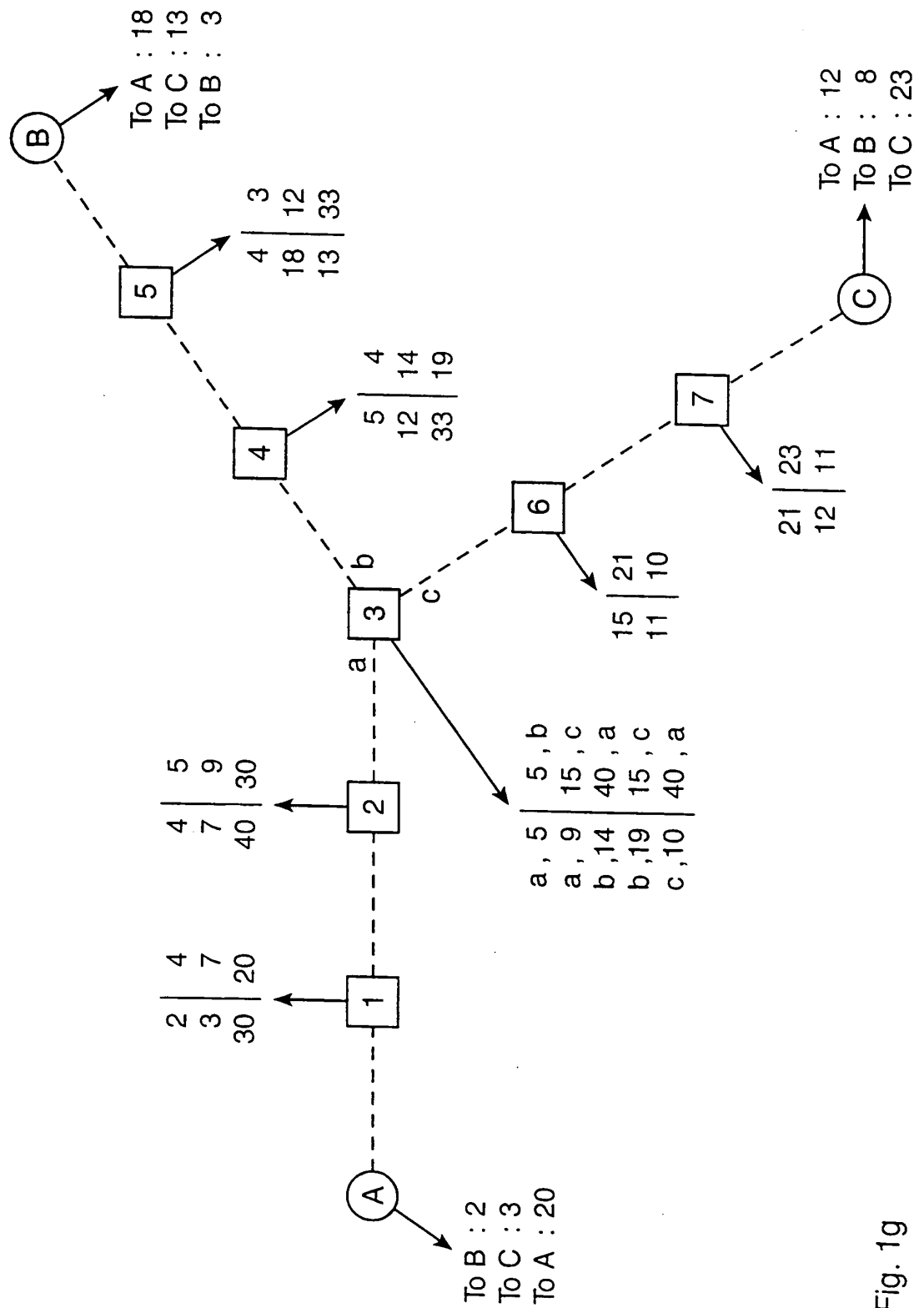
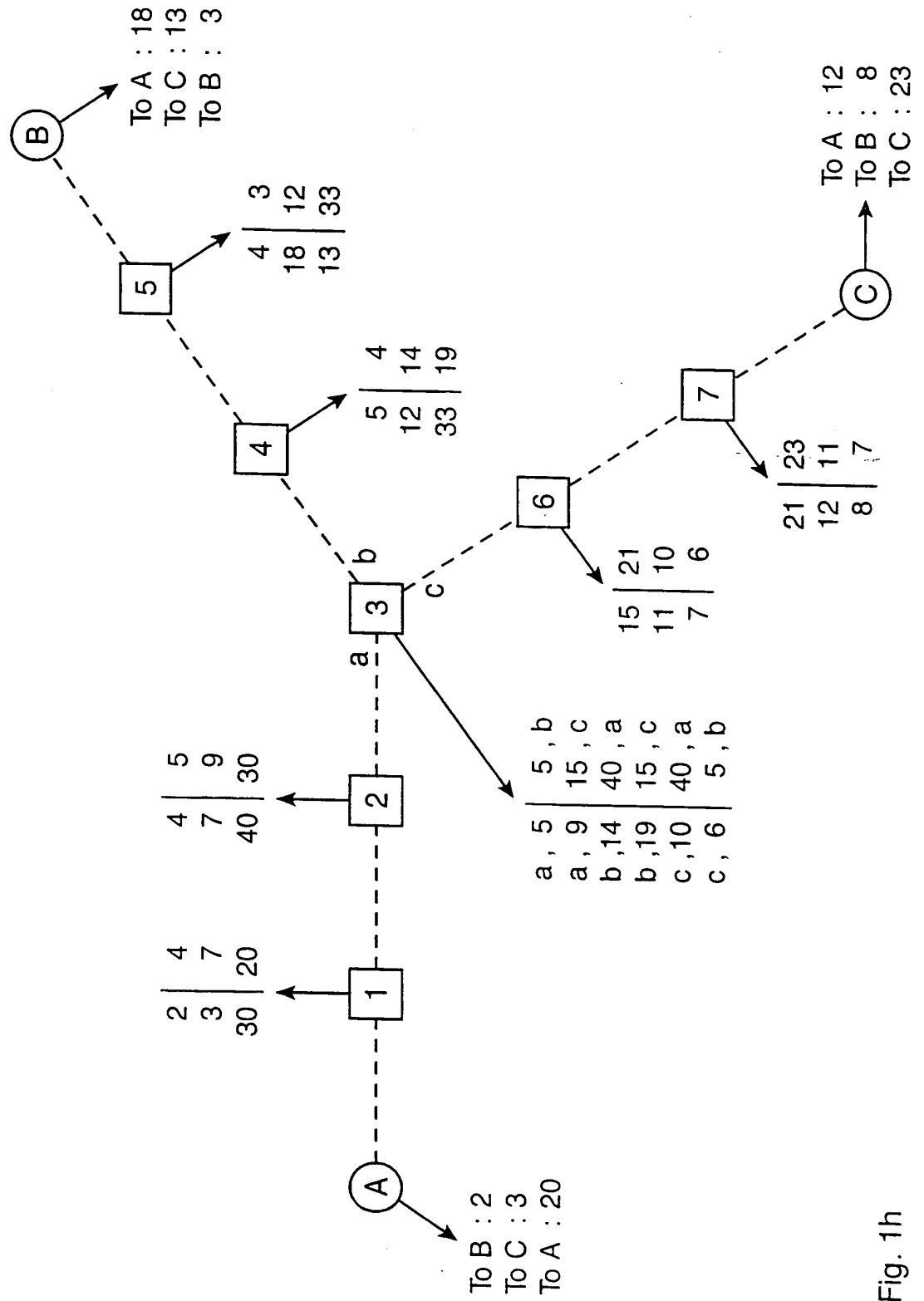


Fig. 1g

8/9



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Fig. 1h

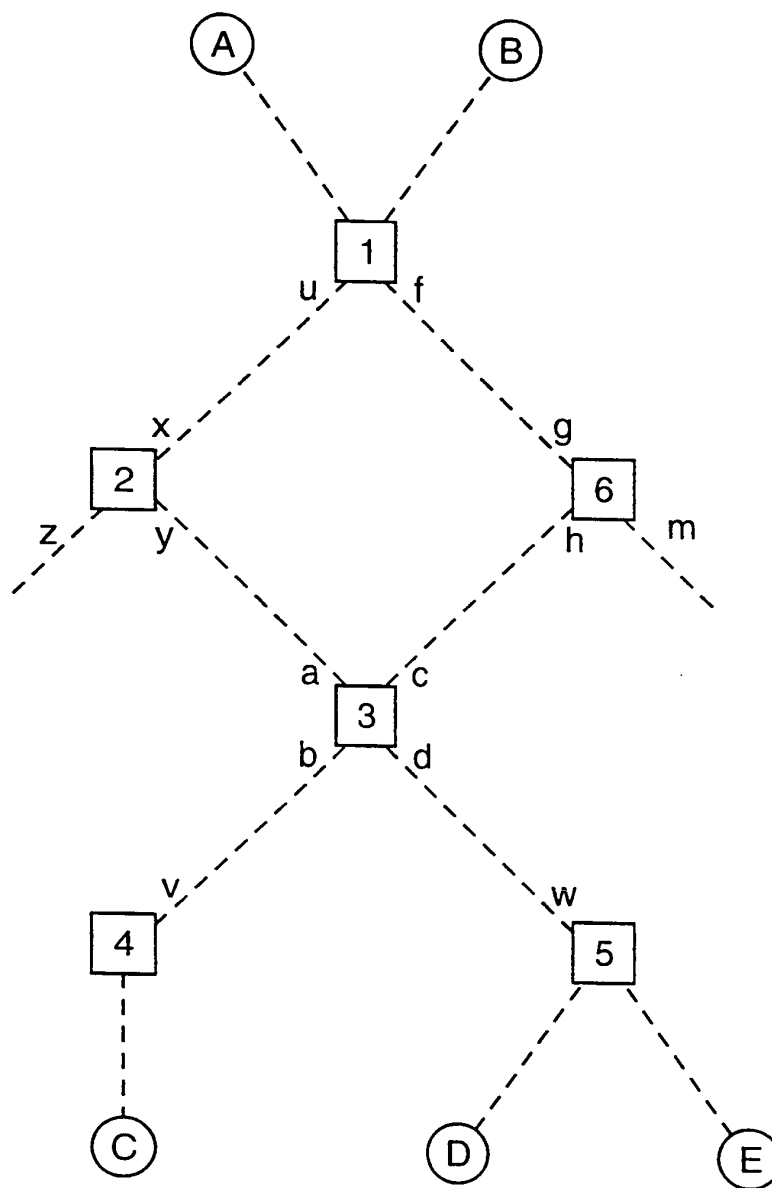


Fig. 2